

Protecting Employees and Family Members from Pesticide Exposure

Are you a grower with employees? If so, are you doing everything possible to protect them, their families, yourself and your family from pesticide exposure?

A good first step is to ensure that you are complying with the Worker Protection Standard (WPS). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recently issued a revision to the WPS *How to Comply* manual originally published in 1993. For a limited time, WSDA is offering Washington growers a free manual by completing the on-line request form at <http://agr.wa.gov/pestfert/licensing/wpsmanual.asp>. If you know an unlicensed grower that would benefit from this manual, please instruct them on how to receive their free copy of the manual as well.

Another excellent step to reduce exposure is to review your pesticide use practices and develop and carry out a farm pesticide safety plan. Ask yourself these questions:

- Are there policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure that you and your employees do not come in contact with pesticides and their residues?
- Do your employees understand what is expected of them and are procedures in place to correct unacceptable behavior?
- Does your farm have the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the pesticides being used and is it properly maintained? Are respirators fit tested and properly used?
- Are decontamination supplies appropriately positioned so that employees can practice proper decontamination procedures?
- Are employees fully aware of how to adequately decontaminate PPE and application equipment?
- Do you and your employees know what measures to take to prevent taking pesticide residues home?

There are many resources available to help get you started. The most comprehensive resource is the National Agriculture Compliance Center at <http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/awor.html>. Here are a few others.

WSDA:

- WPS Web page: <http://agr.wa.gov/PestFert/Pesticides/WorkerProtection.htm>
- Farmworker Education: <http://agr.wa.gov/PestFert/LicensingEd/FarmworkerEducation.htm>
- 2005 *Pesticide Notes* with a focus on pesticide safety:
<http://agr.wa.gov/PestFert/Publications/Newsletter/default.htm>

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- Cholinesterase monitoring requirements:
<http://lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ/Cholinesterase/default.asp>
- PPE guide: <http://www.lni.wa.gov/WISHA/publications/PPEGuide/PPEGuideVol-1.pdf>
- PPE evaluation tools: <http://www.lni.wa.gov/safety/basics/Programs/Protective/default.asp>
- Respirator protection guide:
<http://lni.wa.gov/Safety/basics/programs/accident/samples/respprotectguide2.doc>

Lastly, appropriate and effective training at all levels of your organization is key. While WSDA, WSU and grower organizations can help you train your employees, each farm must take responsibility for on-going pesticide safety training and enforcement of established safe pesticide handling practices.

WSDA conducts a variety of training programs geared at agricultural employees, foreman and growers. Its WPS Train-the-trainer is specifically geared towards growers and foremen responsible for ensuring compliance with the WPS. All training can be conducted in English or Spanish. For further information, contact Flor Servin at (509) 662-0590 or fservin@agr.wa.gov.